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The Black Cat

OCTOBER 1907

The Bone of Contention
Harriet Gaylord

The Battle of Fisher's Kitchen
Katherine Van Harlingen

Heading the Ostrich
J. O. Fagan

Cupid as Jockey
Anna McClure Sholl

Number One
Warren Earle

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The Black Cat

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The Bone of Contention.*

BY HARRIET GAYLORD.

AT the window of a wood-colored farmhouse sat a gaunt woman, busily sewing some bits of faded mourning crêpe on a black straw bonnet. She had been an old maid when, in a mistaken moment, she had decided to test the uncertain joys of being called "Mis' Martin" by the neighbors, and of doing housework for old Job instead of a large family of brothers and sisters. The twenty-five years of life since then had failed to soften her angles and lankiness, and the hard, keen, masculine face with its thin gray hair, tightly twisted into a knob behind, bore no evidence that she had ever bartered away her inalienable birthright of spinsterhood.

Nor would one imagine that she had other than the most impersonal interest in her funereal occupation. Her satisfaction in the task was evident, but it might well pass for the satisfaction of a skilled workman handling his tools. From time to time she rose, opened the hall door, and listened to the sound of footsteps on the bare floor upstairs. Again she would crane her gaunt neck out of the window and gaze calculatingly at the doctor's horse and sulky hitched to the gatepost. At last she heard voices and steps

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descending from above. Dropping her work, she sat rigid, her hands convulsively clasped in her lap, the gleam of insatiable covetousness in her eyes. She heard the doctor's departure, and, when the door into the kitchen opened, made a pretext of working. A young girl, timid, stooping, with frightened blue eyes, entered the room.

"Wall?" demanded her mother, only half concealing her eagerness. "Wall?"

"The doctor sez he can't last through the night," answered the girl in a low tone, "an' he may pass away enny minute."

A gleam of exultation lit up the elder woman's face, and her horny fingers resumed their task with renewed eagerness. The girl shivered, and her pale, apathetic features worked pitifully. Her hand was on the latch when her mother spoke again.

"He ain't asked fur me, hez he?"

"No, ma'am," replied the girl, wistfully. She seemed about to add something, some entreaty, some suggestion but, from habit or timidity, remained silent. She shivered again at the shrill, grim laugh which broke from her mother's lips.

"Good! I guess ef yer father's ben able ter live without speakin' ter me fur eighteen years, he kin die without me jest as wall uz not. There! my bunnit's ready fur the funeral ennyhow. Let's git supper!"

"I — I think I ought to go back to father," stammered the girl.

"Huh! Job Martin ain't deserved no sech care frum you. Still, I ain't anxious ter hev him die all alone. Ef th' neighbors 'ud git hold of it, they'd talk. You kin go, but ef he wants enny cookin', do it on his stove, not mine."

At dawn the next morning, the girl awoke her mother. The hovering shadow of death in that lonely room upstairs had cloaked her with the majesty of courage.

"Come, mother," she said, "come! Father's dying."

The gaunt figure turned relentlessly toward the wall.

"Don't be a fool, Carrie! I ain't goin' near Job Martin till he's lyin' in his coffin an' the minister gits here. I told him that once, an' I'll do what I sed. You git out an' let me be!"

So the girl, old before her time, held the old man's hand, closed his eyes, called in the village undertaker, and arranged for the

funeral. Only when the coffin was placed in the never-opened parlor, when the few village and farm folk had assembled and the minister had arrived, did the widow stalk in proudly, attired in a faded plum-colored cashmere, and that emblem of implacable triumph, her mourning bonnet. Even to the most stolid of the neighbors, her tread, as she gripped her daughter's arm and strode through the field to the little graveyard behind the hill, had the nature of a triumphal march. The daughter shed tears, the weary, helpless tears of one overwhelmed betimes by an inscrutable destiny, but the widow pretended only a decent resignation as the clods of earth clashed down into the shallow grave.

Supper was a silent meal. Now and then the girl furtively wiped her eyes as she nibbled at her hardly tasted food; the mother ate with unaccustomed relish, smiling grimly to herself, as one who plays high stakes against an enemy and holds the winning cards. When they rose from the table she said:

"Now, Carrie, come, and we'll settle yer father's room."

The girl shivered.

"So soon?" she murmured.

"Wall," said the mother, "ef you know whar' he left that knife o' mine, yer kin leave everything else tell doomsday, fur all I care. I ain't longin' ter tech that thief's belongin's, yer kin bet yer boots on that. I want my own, an' I'll hev my own."

Even the girl was amazed at the bitter vindictiveness of the woman's voice, though no one knew better than she the bone of contention which for eighteen years had kept her parents strangers under one roof. From her earliest recollection her mother had wheedled and bribed her to steal back from her father that wonderful tortoise-shell pocket-knife with the five blades of fearful keenness, the shoe-buttoner and the cork-screw, the gift of a travelled uncle at the time of her marriage, whose marvels the simple country folk walked miles to behold.

"She giv' it ter me!" the old man would declare, clutching the treasure greedily. "She giv' it ter me, Carrie, honest she did. She sed when we got married, 'Job, what's mine's yourn,' an' at fust she let me carry it in my pocket all the time, but 'fore you wuz born, Carrie, she got pesky stingy, an' she sed she'd hev it back, but she ain't never got it yit, an' s'long's I live, she never

will. I ain't sure she'll git it when I die. Don't yer bother yer purty head, Carrie. That ol' vixen ain't wuth it."

Up to the last, old Job had fondled his treasure and chuckled over it with sly malice, but this she would not tell her mother. Nature, by some strange freak, had made the child of the two cross-grained, wrangling parents gentle, confiding, neutral; and a bitter training had taught her that comfort lay in silence and the line of least offence and least resistance. Sleeping and breakfasting in her mother's side of the house, she helped her father prepare his dinner and supper, and ate those meals with him, but when the questions came too fast and furious from either parent, she resorted to little fictions, — lies as white as her own soul. So now she answered her mother unhesitatingly:

"I guess it wuz Sunday I saw him usin' it. No, honest, I dunno where he left it," which last was strictly true.

"Carrie, you air a fool! Why didn't yer notice? Yer hadn't no right ter be careless about my property. Light the lamp. We'll need it, an' you come an' help me look."

The widow, with colors flying, threw open the door closed to her for eighteen years, and sniffed scornfully.

"Hm! kinder close, ain't it?" Then her face relaxed for an instant as she peered about.

"Wall, I will say that fur a man, Job Martin hed a real sense o' order. Ef he hedn't, I couldn't never hev lived with him fur seven years. Jest see them shoes o' his'n now, all in a row, an' them bottles on the mantel! An' he wuz good ter you, Carrie. He wouldn't never let yer sweep fur him, would he? Mebbe when I git my knife back, I shall be a real mournful widder!"

Throwing open the blinds, she sat down to an examination of the large old desk, with its many drawers and pigeonholes.

"Set that there lamp on the mantel, wun't ye?" Then she turned suddenly: "Say, Carrie, be ye sure it wa'n't nowhars about the bed when he wuz laid out?"

"Not when I wuz there, mother."

"An' Si Smith didn't say nuthin' about it?"

"No, ma'am."

"Wall, he might hev cut a hole in the feather bed an' tucked it in. He wouldn't want me ter find it tew easy. We'll look."

No knife could she find, even in the two secret drawers of the desk, nor in the closet, where she carefully examined all of Job's clothes. The bureau was searched in vain, and rage reigned in the widow's heart. She shut her mouth as in a vise, and the anxious wrinkles deepened about her eyes. Then she felt, inch by inch, along the larger cracks in the bare floor, holding the light and peering keenly to see if any board had been displaced. She shook the rugs, she punched the feather bed, she dug her hands all through the straw which filled the underticking, and removed the slats from the bedstead, Carrie all the while helping in a half-hearted way. Next she felt the plaster along the woodwork, growing more and more frantic with impending failure.

"Wall, I must say of all the miserly ol' curmudge'ns, Job Martin wuz the wust. Buryin' was tew good fur him! I'm goin' through that there desk agen."

So she did, and through the closet and the bureau and the bed, over and over again, sharply questioning Carrie upon all the customs and habits of her erst-while husband. At last, at midnight, baffled, she gave up the search for the time being with angry despair.

She lay restless, planning and plotting and seeking a solution till morning. Then she announced triumphantly:

"I guess I know what yer father done with my knife. He pertended it wuz hisn an' giv' it ter the minister or the doctor on the sly. A gift expressin' his gratitude, yer see. I never thought he'd be that there mean!"

"Mebbe he did," assented the girl.

"Wall, I'm agoin' down ter the street ter claim my property this very mornin'. I guess they'll be ashamed ter keep it, when I tell 'em the truth about Job Martin."

Accordingly she set off, tramping the eight miles through the dust with implacable fierceness. But alas! neither minister nor doctor had ever heard of the knife, much less seen it, for the cause of the family estrangement had been a secret jealously guarded from curious neighbors. Choking with wrath, and bewildered to hopelessness, she trudged the weary miles home again, refusing to speak to Carrie on her arrival, refusing her supper, and tramping up and down in her room all night long like a caged beast.

As her despair increased, however, her mood became more conciliatory. Next morning she called on Carrie to help her again. They searched the hall outside the dead man's room, and every part of the house which he had used. Then the widow crawled on hands and knees about the yard, feeling with frantic fingers through the turf and flower-beds.

"He couldn't hev thrown it over the wall, now could he?" she asked again and again.

At last they returned to the bedroom and repeated their fruitless search. Suddenly Ellen fiercely turned to her daughter.

"Carrie, you little coward, air you playin' me false? Do you know what he done with that there knife o' mine?"

"No, ma'am," protested Carrie; "I told you I didn't an' honest I don't!" and her mother saw that she would have told if she had known, poor thing! for fear lest the truth be shaken out of her.

"Oh, I can't think whar it is! I can't think whar it is! It seems almost uz ef he'd swallered it ter spite me. Ef he'd done that an' I'd known it, I'd hev give him an emetic, or hed a post-mortem when he died. Yes, I would, you little fool! Don't look at me with them reproachful eyes!"

They entered the closet, and she asked:

"He didn't give away none of his clothes to no one, did he?"

"Not that I know of, mother," answered the girl.

Suddenly a baffled cry broke from the woman as she pointed to an empty hook where Job's best clothes had hung, and all the demons of hatred and malice broke loose:

"Carrie, you ain't the fool!" she cried, clutching the girl by the arm. "No one expects nothin' else of a meachin' critter like you. It's yer mother that's the fool! That there knife's buried with yer father! He put it in his pocket! An' I never hed the gumption to sarch him before he wuz put in his coffin! May I be struck off the meetin'-house book for a dum fool!"

"I guess yer must be right, mother," said the girl, glad of a solution which would end the search. "But ef it's buried with father, you can't ever git it agen." In her heart she was glad.

"I dunno about that," answered the mother, with a cunning smirk. Her energy and ingenuity were indomitable so long as

there was hope, and Carrie paled with horror even before the intense, husky whisper which fell next from the widow's lips: *"Folks haz ben dug up!"*

"Oh, mother!" Carrie screamed, "I'm afraid of you! Don't talk like that! You never could git anyone to do such an awful thing. It's against the Bible!"

"Wall, wall!" muttered her mother soothingly; "I didn't mean nothin'. I jest wanted ter scare ye. Don't take on so!"

During the following days an evil influence brooded over the house. Ellen Martin sat at the window, neglecting her household tasks, one hand supporting her strong chin, her shrewd eyes fixed appraisingly on the hill behind which she believed her treasure lay buried. Again those eyes would flash with anger and bitter hatred as she pictured to herself her husband's corpse lying there in his best clothes, a mocking grin of triumph on his face, perhaps even clutching the pocket in which he had cunningly hidden her knife.

During those lonely days, Carrie crept to bed early. One night she woke, startled by the sound of a heavy metallic fall. She listened, but her mother had been so restless of late that she did not worry, and was just falling asleep when the front-door creaked.

"Mother!" she called. "Mother!"

There was no answer. Springing from bed and lighting a match, she peered into the widow's room only to find her bed untouched. She ran to the window and saw a lantern moving through the mist towards the barn.

"Oh, ma's just gone to the chicken-house," she decided sleepily. "Rover must hev barked. I'll git in bed an' keep awake."

But it was broad daylight when she opened her eyes again, the incident of the night forgotten. She dressed and hurried down to the kitchen. To her surprise, her mother was not there. Back she ran up the stairs, and pushed open the door of the widow's room. On the bed, with calico dress torn and earth-stained, with gray hair dishevelled, sleeping the sleep of profound exhaustion, lay victory triumphant, her long lost treasure clutched in her horny hands.

The Battle of Fisher's Kitchen.*

BY KATHERINE VAN HARLINGEN.

THE plop-plop of a churn dasher, breaking the silence of a hot and cloudy morning, announced that Gertring, only daughter and heiress of Master Martinus Fisher, was busy in the spring house, and the intimation was a welcome one to young Ryck Van Liew, who just then swung along the path, an erect and active figure in his long waistcoat and breeches of brown homespun. As well-favored a youth was Ryck as any in the Province of Delaware, dowered with dark beauty by the brave soldiers and fine gentlemen of old who wrested Holland from the Spaniard and the sea, and had furthermore bequeathed to this remote descendant the trick of setting his broad hat at a most becoming angle, together with some taste and skill in fine metal work and a very martial spirit.

He carried in his hand a huge white gourd, late the pride of Gertring's kitchen garden, but now transformed into a water vessel to delight a housewife's eyes. Its rim, cut with nice accuracy, was bound and lipped with burnished copper, and from the band the ruddy metal ran in fine, suave curves and scrolls over its ivory-white surface, while the stem was tipped with a copper ball, on which were quaintly cut the letters "G. F."

Gertring bloomed like a lily in the cool dimness of the spring house. Her short gown of blue linsey ended just above a trim ankle and stout little buckled shoe. Her snug, low bodice swelled at top into full folds of fine linen, as a lily stem swells into the rounded flower. Her white cap, fitting close to her flaxen crown, turned back in stiff lappets from a face glowing with rhythmic exercise and caressed by little vagrant curls, deserters from her long, smooth braids. At sight of young Van Liew she dropped the churn dasher and took the great gourd in two eager hands.

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"Why, Ryck," she cried, "how fine you have made it! Not your grandsire's self could do fairer work, though he *was* guild-master in Rotterdam."

"The thing is well enough," answered Ryck, indifferently, "but no work, just now, for a man who can fight. Such a one should be shouldering a musket to shoot redcoats! Why, what news, think you, brought Peter Nevins when he stopped at the gate but now? He rides eastward, to rouse the yeomanry. Howe's men have landed at the Head of Elk, eighteen thousand strong! People are fleeing from their homes, though the butchering British cur promises protection to all peaceful country-folk and *pardon*," — he showed his white teeth as he sneered the word — "to such 'rebels' as lay down their arms and return to their allegiance!"

"But," faltered Gertring, as one to whom the full meaning of the grim struggle had for the first time come home, "but surely you wouldn't go away to the war? Why, you might get killed!"

Ryck fell from brooding rage to sudden laughter. He made a pretence of pondering this novel proposition:

"That is true — in war men are sometimes killed." He stepped within the door. "Would you care, Gertring?"

But her eyes were down. She fell briskly to churning, and if her cheeks were hot her words were cool enough:

"My father wouldn't like it, with all the corn to harvest and the threshing not yet done."

"And that is true, too," he answered stiffly, betaking himself with sulky dignity to the threshing floor, where with the thump of the flail he relieved himself of some of his surplus energy and dissatisfaction with public and private affairs.

The sultry haze of morning thickened, as the day passed, into black storm clouds. Towards sunset a shivering west wind caught up a whirling cloud of dust, and presently writhing flashes of lightning cleft both black sky and dust cloud, and the first drops of rain began to patter down.

Swift hoofs turned from the highway just as Ryck was making all secure for the night and running to shelter and supper, and a horseman dashed into Fisher's lane, drew up at the gate and hailed him.

"Is this Martin Fisher's place?"

Ryck turned in the teeth of the wind and looked intently. Through the gathering murk he could make out the blue coat and buff breeches, cocked hat and epaulettes of an officer in the Continental Army.

"Yes," he shouted, assured of the character of the enquirer, and running eagerly forward.

The officer leaned from his saddle, his alert young face peering impatiently into the dusk, and asked abruptly:

"What news of the enemy?"

His keen eyes scanned Ryck's face as the latter repeated the news he had imparted to Gertring, and concluded with a hearty curse for the royal troops.

"We must do more than curse them," he said, manifestly satisfied with the speaker's patriotism, "Meantime, can you give shelter to a small scouting party from the camp at Wilmington, with a private room?"

"Master Fisher will be proud to serve you, I am sure."

"We are six officers, and will trouble you for supper."

The young colonel remained at the gate while Ryck sped round the hip-roofed farm-house of rough stone and burst into the cosy, fire-lighted kitchen, crying:

"Master Martin, some officers from Wilmington seek shelter — Dame Katryntje, can you give them supper?"

Scarce staying for the anticipated answer, he dashed out again, leaving wide the door, which Gertring clapped to. It was she who hurried her bewildered mother through the flagged hallway, hurriedly made ready with a cheery fire and candles on the high chimney-shelf the reverently kept "best room," and finally flung open the front door, regardless of the gale that came shrieking in, so that the windows were hospitably bright and the entrance glowed a welcome by the time the little cavalcade came clattering up the lane.

They were racing with the storm-wind, all on dark mounts save one who spurred a little in advance. His noble white horse loomed large through the dusk, and the tall rider seemed, in the uncertain light, of more than human stature. He rode uncovered, cocked hat in hand, as though to welcome the cool rushing wind. As he turned in at the gate a glare of lightning threw his erect

figure into high relief, glinted on his sword hilt and brought out the whiteness of his powdered head against the dark sky. The company dismounted with a creaking of leather and jingling of metal mingling with a murmur of deep voices, and Ryck gathered the bridles in one hand and led the horses to the barn, while Martin Fisher, bowing backward more reverently than he would before royalty, ushered his guests within, where Dame Katryntje and Gertring courtesied low.

"Welcome, sirs," exclaimed the host, beaming. "'Tis a proud day for me that brings General Washington under my roof."

"And upon my word," answered Washington heartily, "I think, sir, a fortunate one for us." He stood now before the fire, his steady blue eyes scanning the snug, low-raftered room, the stout chairs with their rich Dutch carving, the broad table, the glazed cupboard, full of quaint blue ware. "It seems, gentlemen," said he, "that for to-night, at least, our lines have fallen in pleasant places."

His companions exchanged startled glances, and the youngest of them impulsively spoke. A mere boy, and by his look and accent a foreigner, he wore the uniform of a major-general.

"For to-night?" he repeated. "Surely, your Excellency does not mean to pass the night here?"

"My dear Marquis," was the smiling answer, "your appetite for service is insatiable. It would seem that this day's toils might suffice."

"Doubtless General Lafayette realizes," said another, "what I beg your Excellency to remember, that on the eve of a battle an army's first concern is the safety of its commander."

Washington looked thoughtfully at the speaker, a tall man of some forty years, of a kindly but determined countenance. Though the equal in military rank of the young Lafayette, his uniform was of quakerish simplicity but scrupulous neatness.

"I have no mind to run a needless risk," he said slowly, "and I understand your anxiety, but consider; war is a game of hazard, these roads are unknown to us, our horses are spent, and yours, my dear Greene, is lame. Shall we seek safety, then, in darkness, on strange roads, through a disaffected country, with jaded horses and wet firearms? Or shall we abide the fortune of war here?"

As his companions, glancing dubiously again at each other, signified their willingness to abide by their chief's decision, he walked to the window, against which now dashed a torrent of rain, and stood for some moments looking out into the storm. When he turned it was to the master of the household.

"By your leave, Master Fisher, we will stay." His kind eyes clouded as they dwelt on Gertring, and he added, "But our coming may have been noted by some prowling adherent of King George, and it is but fair to remind you that we shall entail some risk on you and yours."

All eyes followed the General's to where Gertring, her quaint cap and fair hair shining in the candlelight, bent to set a blue platter on the table. For the first time since his guests had entered Martin's ruddy face fell, and he stood silent, recalling that his house stood scarce five miles from the British lines and in a country overrun with Tories. But the girl, catching by intuition the significance of the last words of Washington, stood erect, all her blushing diffidence forgotten.

"My father!" she said reproachfully to the hesitating farmer.

Stout Martin shivered, casting an arm about his daughter and drawing her close, but his voice was steady as he exclaimed:

"Your Excellency is freely welcome here."

"Most welcome," declared Gertring, bravely and clearly.

Her ringing voice and flashing eyes brought an answering light to those of the great general and stately gentleman, who, bowing low to the little country maid, with the spontaneous reverence of one brave soul for another, cried:

"By the Lord, gentlemen, if we had but an army of that mettle, we would soon make the enemy sue for quarter!"

The young Marquis struck his palms together, and all the company joined him in applause, as Gertring, once more confused and blushing, fled to the safe shelter of the kitchen.

The supper which Dame Fisher's chance guests more than once wistfully recalled in "Camp Starvation" at Valley Forge next winter, had long been cleared away and in the front room sounded a steady murmur of voices, taking grave counsel for the morrow. In the kitchen silence ruled, saved for the purring of the fire and the rustle of last week's *Pennsylvania Packet*, as Ryck turned it in

the chimney corner, and the tall Dutch clock had ticked well round toward the bed-time hour of nine, when there came a sharp rapping at the door.

Four startled faces turned toward the sound, and four pairs of eyes questioned one another, what danger might wait without. It was Ryck who finally went slowly to open to the summons, lifting his candle high. It flashed in the eyes of a thick-set man who stood under the porch, forlornly dripping. A Quaker he seemed from the glistening wet drab coat, the wide beaver from which water ran in a stream, and finally by the unctuous "Friend" with which he prefaced his plea for shelter for the night. "Hezekiah Lamb, a plain, godfearing man," he further described himself, lamenting the troublous times that, he said, had barred the doors of every house for miles to a poor laborer, who asked only work and a place to lay his head.

So adjured, the master, none too graciously, made way for the late comer, who meekly removed his muddied shoes and set them in the porch before entering. When he was warmly established at the fire, blinking like any rustic over the brown loaf and jug of milk set before him, Martin asked him:

"Are you come from westward?"

"Yea," drawled the stranger between mouthfuls.

"What hear you of Howe's men? Are the Hessian *jagers* with him?"

"Nay," said the Quaker, "I know naught of such matters. I neither make nor mell with the iniquity of war."

As he spoke spurred heels clanked along the flagged hall and a light tap fell on the kitchen door. When Martin set it half open he found the young aide, Colonel Hamilton, without.

"Master Fisher," said he, "His Excellency has determined to rise before daybreak. Oblige us with our horses about three."

Now it chanced that Ryck was staring over his dull paper with a frown at the man who in those days would have naught to say of war. At the sound of Colonel Hamilton's voice and the mention of "His Excellency" he saw the stolid face of the stranger change. The dull eyes flashed and widened and the "man of peace" drew in his breath like some venomous thing that scents his prey. It was but for a moment, and the mask of rustic

dulness was on again, but Ryck had seen, and so, from the other side of the hearth, had Gertring.

Though it is the habit of youth to seek counsel in dubious matters, yet Ryck had no mind to share his suspicions nor the possible adventure they involved. Instead, he sat on alone by the fire, making an excuse of his convenient paper, after old Martin had dealt his household their nightly portion of Scripture, and ushered his yawning guest up the steep back stairs.

When the house was still, the self-appointed young sentinel rose, took the farmer's musket from the wall and looked to its priming, and then drew the fire together, blew out the candle, and, slipping off his shoes, seated himself on the bench at one end of the great dresser, with the weapon across his knees. The firelight sparkled in the dresser's glass door, glowing in the burnished coppers behind it, and played about Gertring's new gourd on its low bench by the outer door, but Ryck's corner was left in deepest shadow.

To the farm-bred lad, used to be early abed and early afield, it seemed that he had sat a very long time listening to the beat of the storm and the tinkling run of the swollen eaves-trough when, with a great internal commotion, the old clock began to strike eleven. Its strokes were not all counted when a furious blast of the gale struck the house, drowning all fainter sounds, so that there was something ghostly in the slow inward swinging of the stair door, through which Friend Hezekiah Lamb now thrust his head into the room.

Ryck sat rigid in his dark corner and the drab figure glided toward the outer door. He had almost gained it when a tall shape started up, the musket was thrust in his face, and a low voice said, "Halt!"

The intruder started back with an exclamation for which any Friends' Meeting would certainly have administered discipline, but rallying instantly, struck up the barrel of the musket, and Ryck, all unprepared for such a desperate attack, felt his hand thrust aside from the trigger as the red fist of his assailant closed over the guard.

Both clutching the weapon, they swayed noiselessly about the room, in a fierce struggle for its possession, while their shadows,

distorted by the low firelight, mimicked them grotesquely on the walls. But Ryck, taken off his guard, had the feeblest hold, and presently, in his turn, stood looking into the muzzle. He set his arms akimbo on his heaving sides and essayed a laugh:

"Upon my soul, Friend Lamb," he panted, "for a 'man of peace' you have a very pretty tackle. I'll take my oath that this is not your first bout, and in grim earnest, too. But why are you for leaving this hospitable roof at such an hour in such a storm?"

The pseudo-Quaker swallowed another oath and made another movement toward the outer door, but at the sight of young Ryck's massive bulk set firmly against the stout oaken panels, he suddenly changed his tactics.

"Now look here," he said ingratiatingly, but with musket still ready, "a bold young blade like you should be something better than a farm-hand. You have goods yonder," nodding toward the front of the house, "that sent to the right address would bring you a tidy sum in these hard times."

"Know your betters, Master," said Van Liew hotly. "Do you take me for another like yourself?"

"I take you for a swaggering young fool! If you stand not aside and unbar that door before I have told ten, I will shoot and take to my heels."

"No doubt," sneered Ryck, "they have often saved your neck!"

"Silence! One — two — three — "

The boy's dark eyes, smiling at death in the firelight, suddenly dilated, and he closed them with a shiver, which the spy exultingly mistook for a sign of failing courage. But he had seen something. The stair door, like primitive, ill-hung contrivances of its kind, had swung to when the Tory emerged, but now it again opened noiselessly, and Gertring, her little feet unshod, slipped like a shadow into the room.

"Four," counted the false Quaker with a lagging tongue.

She crept along, close by the wall, her dark-clad figure so dimly visible in the half-light that her fair head and white cap seemed to float in air.

"Five — s-i-x — "

She reached the water bench at the spy's back, and grasped the stem of the great gourd.

The Tory was getting impatient. "Seven, eight," he counted more rapidly, and Ryck dropped his arms, which he had folded across his breast, and made a movement as if to unbar the door. The threatening musket was lowered slightly, and the next number came slower than ever — "N — i — n — e —"

There was a splash, and the word ended in a strangling cry. For Gertring, lifting the gourd, with a clenching of her white teeth and a swing of her supple arm, turned it pat over the spy's astonished head. Forgetful of all else, and gasping curses, he threw up a hand to stay the blinding flood, but Gertring clung stoutly to the gourd stem, while Ryck with a spring, wrenched the musket from his loosened grasp, and using it as a club, hit the gourd a sounding thwack.

"Silence in there!" he ordered.

"Ryck!" remonstrated Gertring, still holding fast to the handle, "you will crack my beautiful gourd!"

"Small matter," chuckled he, "an I crack Friend Lamb's as well. Hands down!" came the next order, as he brought the gun to his shoulder and the hammer clicked.

But the hands were already hanging idly down, from beneath the smothering gourd straggled the ends of long, drenched locks, water ran from the shoulders and dripped again from the long skirts of the drab coat, while the feet in their blue yarn stockings soaked in the deepening puddle on the floor. With a smothered laugh at the grotesque figure, they bound their prisoner securely with a clothes line before removing the extinguisher that covered his head.

"Now, Gertring, where shall we tether this Lamb, lest he frisk away before breakfast?"

"The storeroom," suggested the girl. "Its door has a stout bolt," and into the storeroom the captive was bolted. Kilting up her skirts and grasping a mop, Gertring gazed ruefully at the bespattered kitchen.

"This war," quoth she, "is untidy business. Fetch a candle, Ryck, till I mop up the field of battle."

Between the deepest darkness and daylight Gertring became drowsily conscious of a stir in the house. Booted feet tramped through the resounding hallway, bolts were drawn, and by the

moving light on her ceiling she knew that a lantern went wavering along the pathway to the barn. The wind had fallen and the rain pattered now but lightly on the leaves.

Presently came the soft thud and splash of hoofs, the clink of scabbards against spur and stirrup, and a subdued murmur of voices. Gertring opened her lattice softly and looked out. The fine rain drifted against her face. Her father stood at the door with a light, and Ryck with a lantern, by the open gate. As the departing guests, muffled in their blue coats against the rain, passed through the lantern's glow, the horse of the leader showed a dazzling white, and the girl's loyal young heart leapt at sight of it. Then the white shape faded to a vague glimmer as the riders issued into the dripping lane and vanished as suddenly as they had come.

At daylight, when Gertring came down-stairs, her red mouth rounded in a yawn, Ryck was laying fresh wood on the fire, over which the kettle already boiled, while Dame Fisher folded back the white cloth from her night's "rising" of bread.

The door stood open to the radiance of early morning. The wet earth flashed in the sun and a clamor of bird voices filled the air. All that had passed over night seemed but a dream to Gertring, till her father, splashing in the basin under the porch, came to the door, towel in hand, to enquire for their Quaker guest, whose muddy shoes he had just spied.

"Friend Lamb is safe," replied Ryck grimly, and briefly he told the story of the night.

Martin Fisher's face grew black and he advanced toward the bolted storeroom, but young Van Liew laid hand on the knob first.

"Remember, Master Fisher, to bring a Tory spy to justice is to declare yourself against the King."

"That will I declare to all the world!"

"But Howe, with his Hessians, is scarce five miles away."

"I care not were it five paces —" stormed the farmer, but Ryck still gripped the knob.

"Last summer, in the Jerseys," he urged in a lower tone, "these same Hessians stripped coats from rebel backs, burned houses — and shot down women."

Stout Martin glanced at wife and daughter, and groaned in the throes of choosing between prudence and patriotism.

"In God's name, then," he cried at last, "let the beast begone out of my house."

As they loosed with no gentle hands the fetters of the blinking, cringing wretch, Martin muttered:

"This rope would better fit your scurvy neck. But go your own way to — "

But before he could add "the hangman," the spy, staying not for the shoes which the choleric patriot threw after him — by no means in token of good luck — stumbled and slipped down the wet path and out through the gate.

"The devil fly away with him!" exclaimed Martin, and then, catching his wife's eye, piously concluded, "and heaven be thanked for our girl's quick wit, that hath saved the cause and its great leader." And very proudly he threw his arm around Gertring.

"As for you, Master Ryck," he continued, mellowing every moment, "you are a brave lad, and an honest. If Martin Fisher has aught to give that would reward you, you shall have it."

"Then," said Ryck, taking his courage in both hands, "Give me Gertring," and said no more, save with his eyes.

"Gertring?" shouted Fisher. "God of my fathers! Gertring? No!"

Ryck threw out his hands, palms upward, as one who refused all else the world could offer.

But now the maiden spoke up, looking rosy but demure:

"But, my father, you have promised!"

"Aye, that you have, Martinus," echoed Dame Katryntje.

"Promised?" he stammered, "promised? Why, you silly wench, would you have me give you, with all my lands and worldly gear to this penniless lack-land — "

"I would have you keep your word," said Gertring virtuously.

"Lord love the girl!" gasped the flustered father, "what a conscience hath she got!" And he gazed, between wrath and laughter, from one young face to the other. "Hark, ye, Master Ryckart Van Liew," said he presently, "my girl is worth the winning."

"Only tell me how, sir!" breathed Ryck fervently.

"Poor Richard hath it that valor, in these times, is better than riches. So get you to the war, shoot me a few redcoats, win me a captain's epaulettes — and then you shall have her!"

"With all my heart, sir," cried Ryck, "and thank you for the chance."

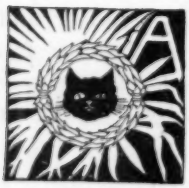
But Gertring's great eyes began to fill and overflow, and her lip to quiver. "But — but — my father, he — he might be killed," and, doubtless because she was ashamed of her tears, she hid her face on Ryck's broad and willing breast. He bent his head and again he whispered, as yesterday, "Would you care, Gertring?" and this time her answer was a little sob.

. . . . . .

After Ryck rode away to the war Gertring held her gourd above the common service of a water vessel, and set it on the window ledge among her tulip pots, and decked it daily, like a shrine. The earliest apple blossoms, the first opened lilacs, the roses of summer and the flaming leaves of fall filled it in turn, and when, freedom achieved and peace declared, Captain Ryckart Van Liew came marching home, he found it brimming over with sprays of Bridal Wreath.

Heading the Ostrich.*

BY J. O. FAGAN.



T least three hundred huge ox wagons, containing more than a thousand women and girls, together with a mixed assemblage of two or three thousand Boer horsemen, were gathered together near Jansen's Nek, in the Komati district of the Transvaal, to witness a remarkable contest between "Red" Dirk Uys of Wakkerstrom and "Crooked" Dirk Breydenbach of Komati, rivals for the hand of the acknowledged beauty of the Boer Republic.

At a monster church meeting, held a few days before at Middleburg, the exciting diversion of voting for the prettiest girl in the country had dampened the usual fervor of the religious services to a marked degree, and finally, when it was announced that little Rosie Van Wyk had been elected by a handsome majority, the jubilation of the contingent from her district was simply boundless.

But, when later, according to custom, the maiden nominated a husband and named "Crooked" Dirk Breydenbach as her choice, much dissatisfaction was expressed by a number of disappointed rivals. Privileged by the rules of the competition, one of these ambitious young fellows, Dirk Uys of Wakkerstrom, surnamed the "Red" on account of his fiery disposition, immediately challenged the fortunate winner and called upon him to uphold his claim and prove his manhood and horsemanship by competing in the celebrated contest known all over the country as "Heading the Ostrich." But if the disgruntled and hot-headed youngster had any idea that little Dirk Breydenbach would tamely surrender his beautiful bride he was much mistaken.

Dirk, it is true, was small, and had a bad figure, but nevertheless, he was one of the most popular young Boers in the Komati,

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and for very good reasons, too. When a mere boy he had made for himself a glorious record by successfully defending a party of women and children during a night raid by an impi of murderous Kaffirs, and his deformity was the result of a wound received on that occasion. He was not only brave but amiable, quiet and unobtrusive, and universally beloved for his cheerful disposition. From childhood his name had been coupled with that of Rosie Van Wyk, and as the boy grew up his sweetheart seemed to think less of his deformity and more and more of his sterling character and of his renown as the cleverest horseman and hunter in all the wide, game-covered country east of the river Vaal. Consequently, when it became known that his right to marry the girl who had chosen him had been challenged by an upstart from another district, universal interest and much indignation were aroused, and the Boers of the Komati were outspoken in behalf of their favorite.

A well known ostrich hunter was kept busy for nearly a week arranging the details of the contest. Fortunately, he found an ostrich nest in a splendid situation. The next morning, he galloped suddenly upon the scene, whereupon the male bird, which was acting as sentinel, rushed at top speed away from the nest, hoping in this way to deceive the hunter and draw him away from the group of females crouching in the grass among the eggs.

The Boer chased the bird vigorously for some distance, and then retired from the pursuit as if beaten. On three successive mornings the hunter played the same trick, and the ostrich, satisfied with the success of its tactics, took exactly the same course, almost stride for stride, on each subsequent occasion.

Having made certain of the bird's exact course, the old hunter sent a notice far and wide that on the following Saturday morning a magnificent male ostrich — "a terrific runner" he wrote — would be started from the northwest corner of Hans Botha's farm. The bird, the bulletin said, would run to the edge of the plateau, then down through Jansen's Nek and out over Prinsloo's flats as far as Bushman's spruit, where, balking at the running water and afraid to cross it, as the ostrich invariably is, he would swerve suddenly and sharply to the right, and take a course as straight as an arrow to the westward

The eventful morning came. All horsemen and wagoners were warned to keep well to one side and leave the course to the rival horsemen. The rules for the contest itself were very simple. The rivals were permitted to take up any position they chose ahead of the bird, and await its approach, but were required to keep at least five hundred yards to the right of the expected route, to give the bird plenty of room to dodge, and themselves opportunity to manœuvre. The man who could head off the ostrich and knock him over with a blow of the sjambok would be the winner.

And so hundreds of Boers, with their families, were on hand from Wakkerstrom, Utrecht, and the south country, as friends and relatives of Red Dirk, while the farmers from Middleburg and the Komati were, of course, present in great number to cheer the efforts of their favorite little crookback, when suddenly the big ostrich was sighted sailing down through Jansen's Nek, following the exact course foretold by the hunter. Along the route the spectators were nerved up to a high pitch of excitement, but the speedy bird paid no attention to the long string of wagons and horsemen lining the flats. Scornful of danger, with stately and majestic stride he glided along like a winged phantom.

All at once, catching sight of the two rival horsemen bearing down upon his course, he shot forward like a shell from a cannon, and the spectators shouted with delight. Nothing but sudden death could stop that fearful rush!

Twisting and turning his little bullet head from side to side, his wings half extended, his huge, stilt-like legs rattling off the enormous strides with dazzling rapidity, onward sped the big bird, while the two Dirks, side by side, dashed down upon him.

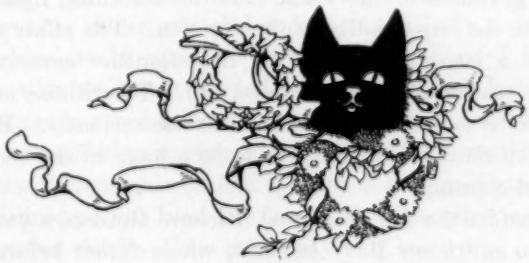
All eyes were soon fixed upon the spot where the ostrich had invariably swerved from the running water of Bushman's spruit and turned sharply westward. It was observed with astonishment that Red Dirk Uys, instead of heading for the route which the bird would take, kept straight ahead. If he did not change direction soon, it was seen, he would be into the spruit, and his rival would inevitably meet the ostrich at the critical turning point.

On rushed the race. The magnificent bird, paying no attention to his pursuers, went tearing along at breakneck speed. Onward

sped Red Dirk, to the very verge of the spruit. A shout went up. Now he was on the farther side of the stream, but not a drop of water had flashed in the sunlight as he crossed! A howl of surprise was followed by yells of disappointment from some of his supporters, and a rousing cheer from the friends of his rival, as the great bird suddenly wheeled around, like a yacht coming about in a gale of wind, and darted full at the crook-backed horseman! Following its accustomed course with undiminished velocity, it was seen that, in a moment, they must collide like express trains on a single track! Dogged and stupid, with but one idea in its diminutive brain, the ostrich, it was certain, would not be the one to swerve!

Then a thrill of delight ran through the multitude, as Crooked Dirk, suddenly turning and checking his pony at the crucial instant, whirled the ready sjambok through the air, and the plucky plumed runner of the veldt dropped prone in the dust!

As the wondering crowd pressed forward to view at closer range the victor and vanquished, a strange sight met their eyes. Where the swift waters of the spruit should have been sparkling, lay the damp bed of the stream — diverted over-night by the crafty partisans of Red Dirk Uys! They knew that an ostrich will turn from a running stream, and believed that it would cross the empty channel, but they forgot that it is an unreasoning creature of habit, and, between the cupidity of man and the stupidity of the bird, Crooked Dirk Breydenbach won his bride.



Cupid As Jockey.*

BY ANNA McCLURE SHOLL.

RICH and eccentric Mr. Sears had always delighted in setting the little town of Upwater by the ears, but no one dreamed of a post-mortem chuckle from the old gentleman. It came in the form of a bequest in his will — one thousand dollars to the prettiest woman in the place, the judges to be chosen from the elderly married men of the community.

The hubbub was instantaneous, and of a nature to warm the heart of a cynic. Mothers spoke jealously of the charms of their daughters. The ministers prepared sermons against the sin of vanity thus flagrantly encouraged by the late Mr. Sears. The "best people" signalized their intention of standing aloof from the contest. But at last a reaction set in, started by someone's saving sense of humor, and it was almost unanimously decided that the terms of the will must be complied with. An appointed Committee fixed upon a day in June for the assembling of the contestants. They were to come in their best apparel, and to abide by the vote of the judges "without murmurings or disputings." The contest was to be held out-of-doors, in the sunny garden of one of the grandees of the town, that the searching light of day might add to the impartiality of the decision. The affair was thus turned into a lawn-party, and, the first families agreeing to be present, the rest of the town followed suit. To criticize or to stay away would be to take the whole matter too seriously. Everyone must come to show her willingness to be a loser in the stake upon her personal charm.

A week before the day appointed, Richard Gordon, a young lawyer, went to call upon Mary Bennett, whose father before his invalidism had been a professor in the college town from which

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Gordon's family also came. Something of academic reserve and grayness pervaded the atmosphere of the little white-and-green house in the quiet side street. Richard, waiting for Mary in the dim parlor with its steel engravings of famous pictures, felt that the girl's life was somehow like them, beautiful in line and form, but lacking the color that selfishness, rather than self-denial, seems to impart to human existence. She had always sacrificed herself to the demands and needs of others, until she was like a white flower brought out of the sunshine to cheer a sick-room.

He was absorbed in his thoughts of her when she entered, a welcome glowing in her eyes. Though she was tall and straight and wholesome to look upon, no one had ever called her pretty. Her features were too irregular, and she was too pale. Her chief asset was her abundant dark hair. Richard had never thought of her being in the contest, so he did not even apologize when, after a few moments' conversation, he showed her a list he had made of the women who, in his opinion, had the best chance of winning — a list from which her name was omitted.

"I thought it might amuse you to go over them with me and to sum up their points."

"I see that you have headed it with Bertha Klendenning. That is easy to understand."

"But my grounds are different from most people's," he said with the earnestness that he always brought to any subject which interested him. "Her blue eyes and yellow hair and story-book complexion count very little. It's her lovely figure and her charm of manner — her more subtle advantages, so to speak — that make her what she is, graceful and womanly."

He seemed to be absorbed in an inner vision of her. Mary sat very still, her hands clasped together, her eyes but half-lifted. He could not know of course that he was hurting her. She did not wish to acknowledge it even to herself, but she would have been glad if the obvious charms had had the chief significance for him. Inexperienced as she was, she knew that the spirit can establish a far greater rivalry than mere physical beauty.

"I quite agree with you. Who is next on the list?"

"Katherine More — it's the curve of her upper lip," he added confidentially.

"And next?"

"Dora."

"Because — ?"

He laughed.

"It has something to do with the tip of her nose."

"I quite understand. Dora's nose will keep her young when she's fifty."

"And then come the ladies who have only to put on a pink ribbon to be called pretty. You see my scorn of them places them last."

"Poor things! Well, I think it will be Bertha. You must tell me all about it afterwards!"

"But, my dear, you're surely going!" he said, earnestly, knitting his boyish brows.

"I can't unless father is better."

"Oh, you must — it will amuse you so! I'll call for you to make sure!"

"Well! I don't forbid your calling!" she answered with a smile.

When he was gone she went to her room and gave herself up for the time to sad and wistful thoughts. How natural that he should regard her only as a friend and offer her only the genial courtesies of comradeship. He had known her all his life, whereas he had known Bertha but a year, and novelty is an ingredient of romance.

She spent a troubled week, trying to come to terms with herself. In her dark moments she had perversely wished to make herself look as plain as possible, taking a kind of pride in being utterly out of the running; but with the first dawn of gentler feeling came the desire to look her best, and to enter into the spirit of the occasion. To appear to be not jealous was not enough. She would root jealousy from her heart.

So when the time came she curled her hair and arranged it with all the art that she could command. She put on a soft, white summer gown and a picture hat with roses. She was drawing on her long gloves when Richard arrived. He seemed in the highest spirits.

"I was prepared to use force, if I found you backing out. I

have some news to tell you about myself — something that's made me very glad, and I want you to be glad with me."

Her heart sank. Was he going to tell her of his engagement to Bertha? She turned a pale face to him.

"Can't you guess, Mary?"

But she was dumb. He leaned towards her and took both her hands in his.

"I've got the position I wanted in the office with Jenkins & Bart — and it's a kind of partnership, Mary. It's easily worth five thousand a year."

She drew a long breath of relief and looked at him with shining eyes.

"I'm so glad — so glad!"

"You can't be so glad as I, because, my dear —" he hesitated. Her sudden little flame of joy again sank.

"You see I didn't want to speak until I was sure —"

Even then she would not believe. She had turned her head away. Was it Bertha — oh, was it Bertha?"

"You see I've loved you always — why Mary —!"

Then she turned a rapturous face toward him.

How they reached the appointed place she never knew. She walked on air, surrounded by a ring of gold that enclosed one other person. In her happiness she called upon the sunlight to see, and upon the west wind to witness; on the flowers in the garden to bear her company. She unfolded her soul to all the joy abroad in the world. Her eyes shone. A bright color came to her cheeks. Richard, excited and triumphant, looked at her adoringly, seeing in her at once the woman of his future and the playmate of his childhood. They would show themselves at the contest for a minute, just to be public-spirited. Then they would go for a heavenly ramble in the woods.

The judges had decided to make the award after mingling informally with their towns-people, so there was no set ceremony, no drawing-up of the contestants. People strolled about or talked together in groups, as at a garden-party. Here and there a girl was seen whose heightened color betrayed her consciousness of being under scrutiny, for it was generally known that the courteous judges, chatting casually with their friends and acquaint-

ances, were all the while gleaning impressions which would be of service in making the decision. The occasion, on the whole, did not seem favorable to the setting-forth of feminine charm. Even Bertha, by becoming self-conscious, had lost something of her usual grace. Katherine's pretty bow of a mouth showed a disposition to straighten, and Dora's infantile nose failed to save the day for her. As for the young women whose charm depended on pink ribbons, they had all apparently chosen the wrong colors, and knew it when too late. Only those hopelessly out of the running seemed to be really enjoying themselves.

Richard and Mary stayed on longer than they had expected. Both had many friends, and joy, even unexpressed, is a powerful magnet. But at last he put an urgent hand upon her arm.

"Come, dear," he whispered.

"We might as well wait now. They're going out — the judges. I want to know whether it is Bertha or Katherine."

"We'll know when we return — and what do we care!"

"But you were so enthusiastic last week!"

"I was only diverting myself during a tedious period of suspense."

It was expected that the judges would not remain out long, but a half-hour went by, and they were still debating in the little summer house to which they had withdrawn. A feeling of uneasiness began to make itself apparent. Bets were cancelled, and re-arranged again. No one seemed as confident as at the opening of the contest. At last the judges were seen to rise, and then, two by two, they came across the lawn, and took their places on a flower-decked platform. A sudden hush fell over the assembly. The chairman waited until everyone had come within hearing distance of the stand before making his announcement, then, after reading the clause in the will, he said:

"The difficulties in the way of a fair decision can hardly be appreciated by those not members of the committee. In the making of it, in the judging and weighing, we crave your clemency. Having made it we are sure of your enthusiastic support. The prize has been awarded to Miss Mary Bennett."

There was a confused murmur. Richard, more surprised than anyone, turned to look at Mary. It was true! It might be gone

to-morrow, but to-day her radiant joy made her the most beautiful woman there. She seemed all light and color and happiness, and they had felt it and recorded it.

She would not believe it at first, and wanted to hurry away, but they detained her and showered congratulations on her until she was glowing like a rose. Each moment enriched her, adding weight to the decision.

"You were a dark horse," said a friend, at once puzzled and convinced.

"Cupid was Jockey," said Richard.

Number One.*

BY WARREN EARLE.

IT will doubtless be remembered by those who are interested in that sort of thing that during the year 1900 the Phipson magazine published a number of articles descriptive of various places and institutions in and about the Central American countries. These articles were varied in character and extent. Geographically, they ran from Northern Mexico to Panama, and for subject matter they discussed questions as widely divergent as ancient methods of mining silver and modern methods of conducting universities.

I am free to confess that when I received my assignment to this task, in the fall of 1899, it was with no great degree of pleasure that I anticipated a prolonged absence from New York. Yet when, in October of 1900, I found myself waiting in Guatemala City for the wire which would send me home, it was with a keen sense of regret that I contemplated my return. The last of the articles had been completed, the last story, one of Guatemala and its University, had been submitted. There was nothing more to be done, and so I loafed and waited in the beautiful city among the hills. In due time the message arrived, and because I had become fascinated by the country, its rich tones, its delicate climate, its strange people, it was with something akin to a feeling of reprieve that I read:

"Go to Chichen, Yucatan, and write up the ruins."

The details of my packing and my trip to the coast have nothing to do with this narrative, and no more has my journey from Puerto Barrios to Tanamo. It was a calm journey in a calm country and on a calm sea. The valley of the Motagua and the coast of Belize I described at length in my articles for Phipson's and I shall refrain from further detail here. It is sufficient to say

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that on the 13th day of November, 1900, the shore boat of the *Santa Maria* drew up beside the slimy green steps of a rickety wharf and I stepped into Yucatan. My bag was unceremoniously dumped beside me, and without more ado the small boat shoved off. The steps were broken and tilted. I ascended gingerly, half expecting to be precipitated into the water. Three steps at the top were entirely gone. I climbed as far as I could, tossed my bag to the dilapidated flooring, and was preparing to scramble up one of the side pieces when I heard someone say, "Give us your hand, Stranger." I did as directed, and was incontinently yanked on to the wharf.

I was expecting to meet and see many strange things in Yucatan, but when I straightened and found myself confronted by six feet of what was unmistakably Western American, from the Stetson to the boots, it occurred to me that the odd and unusual was becoming very strikingly apparent. I was suddenly aware that this familiar figure in this strange setting was probably as queer a thing as I would encounter in all this country.

"He looks too blamed natural," I thought, and might have added, "And acts so," for the big man extended the voluminous hand again, flashed a smile from beneath his long moustache, and drawled:

"Howdy, Stranger, where you from?"

I took the hand and shook it vigorously.

"From down the coast," said I, "Where you from?"

The other released his grip and jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"From up the coast," he replied.

I feared I had made an unpropitious beginning of our friendship, but if he saw, he quickly forgave, for in terse Rocky Mountain phrase he assured me that I was welcome and my coming fortuitous. In a very few moments he put me at my ease and before the steamer had cleared the harbor on her way to the open we were on terms of companionship.

"Which same being the only conveyance in these parts," he volunteered, referring to the steamer, "it don't make no never mind whether we came from above or below, one thing being sure a plenty, which being that here we are pretty damn liable to stay."

"For the time being," said I.

"And most times thereafter," he added.

With wide and generous sweeps of the hand he called my attention to the things he considered noteworthy, while I, on my own account, noted the green bearded piles of the wharf, the white sand bottom shiftingly visible twenty feet below the surface, the headlands to north and south of the little bay, the sleeping green forests and greener mangrove swamps, and the dry, interlacing roots between the water and the high water line. The steamer disappeared behind the northern point. The churning throb of the screw came faintly to us across the still waters. A long streamer of smoke slowly drifted seaward, and the transplanted one finished his dissertation with the words:

"If sighing was in my line, I'd heave a few bars right now for exercise." Then turning to me and looking keenly from searching blue eyes, he added:

"Stranger, seeing as how I am the only known white in these areas, you and I are pretty liable to foregather considerable. What might it be your desire to be called?"

"I should prefer that you call me Jim," I answered, "though my name is James Alfred Parker Packard."

He pulled his moustache thoughtfully.

"And I should prefer that you call me Bill," said he, "though my name is not Biloxi Billington Billson, as happened to a friend of mine once in Texas. As to the grub pile," he went on, as though in answer to my unspoken thought, "You'll find we are largely rejuced to nature. The larder of this yere camp contains beans, beans, beans and more beans, also bananas, limes, guavas and other fruits of the forest, also a native sort of Bull Durham not unpleasing to the soul, when the soul has become properly qualified."

So saying he picked up my bag and started shoreward, exactly as though I had come on invitation and been met by appointment. The town before us consisted of a few broken-down thatched houses lazily sleeping in the sunshine. I noticed that with the exception of a few small boys who contemplated us with shyly curious eyes there were no signs of life. I commented on the fact to my guide, and he sniffed scornfully.

"Where are all the folks?" said he. "Oh, they're all sleeping a heap just about now. It takes more than the arrival of the third stranger to visit these parts in two hundred years to make this yere outfit lose its siesta, you can bet. They'll crawl out 'long about sundown, and pull a plantain or two before they turn in for the night."

It was evident that the populace did not conform to the ideals of his strenuous soul, but the town slept peacefully on, unmindful of his scorn. At the farther side of the place we came to a large stone house, surrounded by a hedge of Spanish bayonet, and so situated as to overlook the village and harbor. Into this house Bill led me, and in the big, cool living-room thereof he made me welcome. After short drinks, I was conducted to a back room and informed that it was mine as long as I cared to stay. I recognized this for luxury, and said as much.

Clean linen made for a new life, and I returned to the front room in the hope, but not the expectation, of a good dinner. Bill was busy with a can opener. My eyes spread with amazement.

"Canned salmon in a stone palace?" I exclaimed.

"Concerning which same I will orate as we feed," said Bill.

That dinner began with turtle soup and ended with coffee. I had obtained Havanas on the boat, so the native Bull Durham wasn't requisitioned.

"As to the palace," said my host, "there is a big boss man who owns all the adjacent earth hereabouts. He has a little boss man who scratches gravel for him and has to live right here in this metropolis. The big boss man did once, but he don't have to no more, so he don't, you bet. The old man left it all one bright day, and told these yere agriculturists to keep out, and you can wager they do a heap. Now, as to the luxuries: You remembered I said you was Number 3. Well, I'm Number 2. Number 1 was amongst them present, but has vamoosed. He was a man of refined tastes and much sense. He found a palace empty, and he recognized the fact immejiate that the same had sure been designed for him by an all-wise Providence. He fetched up his salmon and peas, hammocks and trunks, and sent out his at home cards to the natives. After which, he bought one large mule, and sailed away into the interior. I am administrator, with the cans

annexed. Simple, you see, simple as jerking steers." He took a long pull at his cigar. "The big boss man's name is De Hogues. He is a friend of yours — and mine — and number 1 — and all other white men who strike these outskirts."

The smoke flattened and drew out through the window. Bill turned his searching eyes on me, and I could see that he was waiting for me to explain. So I told him the object of my visit, and what I had done and what I wanted to do in Yucatan. Of course, I was intensely desirous of knowing his own reasons for being in Tanamo, but it was matter to be volunteered, not requested, and the only clue I ever obtained, either to his name or condition was this, and I write it here that any who chance to read may have as much information as myself. I ended my explanation thus:

"So I am here because of certain people in New York, and the sooner they hear from me the better they will be pleased."

To which he replied, "And I am here because of certain people in Colorado, and the sooner they hear from me the less I will be pleased."

My errand and my proposed trip to Chichen Itza were much to his liking, and the invitation to accompany me which I extended was accepted at once. I considered this turn of affairs extremely lucky. The country was wild, and, as he hinted, more or less dangerous. He was a frontiersman, ready, alert, quick and resourceful, — the very man I should have chosen. The next day was spent by him in securing horses, saddles and other equipment, while I loafed around town.

The natives were a careless, shiftless mixture of Spanish and Indian, who worked as little as possible, and looked upon the absent De Hogues as something and not someone. They tilled his fields, and made his money for him, and were content. To satisfy a natural curiosity I made inquiries concerning Number 1, and from their descriptions I concluded that he was a prospector, either American or English. From the amount of his luggage I fancied him English, but the natives said he chewed tobacco, and that gave color to his American citizenship. As to his fate they were as calmly enigmatical as a summer sea. About six months ago he had come and gone. He had not been seen since. Did they think him dead?

"Ah, Señor, undoubtedly."

"How, robbers, thieves?"

"No, no, certainly no."

"What then, snakes, jaguars?"

"Possibly," with an incredulous shrug.

"What then, if none of these things?"

"Ah, quien sabe — who knows?" and knowledge-denying, outstretched hands.

"And do men disappear in this country without explanation?"

The witness crossed himself quickly, and replied,

"Ah, Señor, no — yes — sometimes."

In the course of the day I met the "little boss man," and found him an intelligent fellow of some learning. During the conversation I mentioned my object in visiting his town, and he said,

"You are going to the ruins?"

"Yes."

"The ones at Chichen?"

The form of the question attracted my attention.

"Are there others?" I asked quickly.

He hesitated, and then he, too, crossed himself hastily.

Before he could formulate a lie, I added,

"If so, where are they?"

He paused, but finally said,

"I do not know. No one knows. It is said that a lost temple exists back of Chichen in the mountains. It may be — for myself — I doubt. Perhaps the people at Chichen can tell you."

That was all the information I could obtain. For himself, he doubted, and all the time we talked I noticed that he made the witches' cross with his left hand.

I told Bill of these experiences when we ate that evening, and asked if he knew anything of these other ruins.

"Wall," said he, "You know these yere Greaser people are a heap superstitious. One of their ancestors ain't more'n begun to live when they bury him. He's just commencing to get busy. Why, one of these fellers will worry an' abuse his pore ol' gran'-father till the ol' man crosses the divide for self-protection, en' then that there undutiful but husky son will see the harmless ol'

man's harmless ol' ghost a-sittin' back in the corner some night, an' he'll get so skeered he'll go to work. It sure do surpass my comprehension. Now, for this new outfit of ruins you've caught the wind of, I've heard a heap about them — in whispers. It's a sort of lost temple, as the native man told you, an' it's presumed to be guarded by the ghosts of the remnants of the ol' Apaches who used to hunt hereabouts. No one knows where it is. No one wants to know. No one has ever seen it, and no one in this municipality intends to see it, if he can help it any. If it's here at all, an' I'm sure doubtful if it is, it's back in the hills beyond Chichen. Are you desirous of investigatin' that same?"

"I think we'll look it up, if you're willing to put in the time," I said.

"Time?" he replied, "Time, time is a matter of the temperate zone. We will investigate. We will probe around copious. We sure will."

"Then you are not afraid of spirits?" I queried laughingly.

"Not tremenjious," he answered, "though as a young man I seen and heerd things which were sure uncanny some. I was a-sittin' quiet one night by my fire when a coyote crawled up close to my coat tail, more or less, and yelped. I was new to their ways in them days, and I reckon I elevated myself some ten feet immejiate, and I wa'nt more than half way to the ground on my return trip when a big buck Injun come out of the air on the other side of the fire, an' says 'How.' I was sure agitated a few, but the coyote run, an' the Injun begged a chew of tobacco. They wasn't ghosts by a whole lot."

We sat and talked that night for two or three hours, while the stars came out and blazed in the heavens, and the cucujos gleamed and flashed in the shrubbery. We shook hands again as we parted for the night, and I thanked my luck anew for the fortune which had given me the adventurer for companion.

The next day we mounted our horses and started up the trail for Chichen. Again I shall ask the reader who desires information to peruse Phipson. I saw the ruins there and studied them carefully. Their architecture, to my mind showed unmistakable signs of kinship with the early Egyptian works, and my observations and reasons I set out at length in the article which I

afterward prepared for publication. The triple row of low pillars puzzled me, as they have puzzled others, but the week I spent in the ancient city served to inspire me with a whole-hearted desire to see more of this ancient race. The civilization which they must have possessed piqued my curiosity, and before I had finished my work there I had resolved to follow all clues which might lead to a better understanding of a people which lived so fully and so well even in the dawn of time.

While I was occupied with the ruins Bill scoured the country for information of the lost temple. He dutifully reported progress each evening, but though he unearthed many rumors and traditions, it was not until the end of the week that he obtained any real satisfaction. A man by the name of Pedro said he knew where the temple was, and after being paid liberally he promised to guide us in.

We left on the evening of November 25th. The guide declared we could make it in two days and a half easily. I reserved a doubt as to his competency and accuracy, and I confessed fears as to his constancy, but as long as he led on I could say nothing.

The morning after we left Chichen we found ourselves among foothills. The country was somewhat open, and away in the distance the mountains loomed up grandly. That afternoon we reached the edge of a forest and took to the dry bed of a stream. This we followed between living walls of foliage which towered up and arched above us. The trees stood thick and were all hung with trailing vines. In some cases six or seven trunks, each as large as a man's body, would ascend to a height of twenty feet and there unite to make one great bole reaching up into a labyrinth of branches and leaves.

The forest was silent with the deadly silence of a sick room. The sunlight filtered through in blotches and streaks. The course ahead looked cavernous. One could see neither to the right nor left, nor yet far ahead or behind. The rattle of the dry stones beneath the feet of the horses sounded hollow to the ear. I never before fully realized the meaning of the phrase "cathedral silence" as applied to an aspect of nature.

We travelled the watercourse until late afternoon and then, upon command of the guide, we halted, unsaddled and made

camp on a grassy point at a bend in the river. We ate supper and turned in early. I slept soundly. In the morning, I saddled the horses and we had breakfast. We were about to take up our line of march when the guide, with an apology, commenced to explain to us in detail the route we were to follow.

"Now never mind all that," said Bill, interrupting him, "We will take note as we go. For the present you just move ahead and we'll trail along."

But it then developed that Pedro had a sick mother who was old and feeble and who was dying when he left, and who was probably even now within a few hours of her end, and it was not well that her only son should be away from her when she died.

"A hold-up," was Bill's comment, and he pulled out a bag and took some gold pieces from it. Aside from a flittering gleam of interest in the eyes, there was no effect. Instead of taking the coins the guide leaned against his horse and shook his head. I noticed that he looked sallow, and now and then stretched his neck as though to loosen his neck-band. Bill's keen eye took in the situation.

"Lost his nerve," he observed, "now, I wonder why for?"

He cursed a little in Spanish, but the man was obdurate. In the half light of the morning with the mists about us, we three with the horses stood grouped on the little point, dully glaring at each other. A parrot screamed from the trees. At last, after looking from one to the other, the man said, huskily:

"Feel the horses."

Now, when I had saddled them, I had noticed that they had been sweating, but I had not thought it worth while to say anything. I remembered, too, that when we woke they were all standing in close to us as we slept. Bill felt of the horses and I saw his eye run the banks of the river, but he only said:

"Well, what of it?"

The guide fairly glared at him.

"What of it? What of it?" he said in a half whisper, "Did you sleep last night?"

"Like a brick," said Bill.

"And you?" to me.

"The same," I answered, "Why, didn't you?"

"No," he said, "No. I did not. I could not. I—I—" he paused, and then added, "I could not."

"Well, why not?" said Bill, "out with it. Why not?"

"Because," was the answer, "we were not alone last night. I heard footsteps and I saw shadows on the river bed in the moonlight."

"I fear our guide has the national complaint," said Bill. "That's enough for this time. Just you climb aboard your cayuse here and trot along."

"Ah—you do not believe! You think I lie? Come!"

He clutched Bill's sleeve and dragged him to the river. I followed and we crossed to the farther shore. It was a low bank, mossy and covered with tall grasses and ferns. The native parted these grasses, and peered into the undergrowth. We craned our necks, but could see nothing unusual. The man turned very white, and quickly ran to four other places along the bank at equal intervals around the bend. At each, he stopped and peered into the grass. When we reached him he was shaking with nervousness and muttering, "I saw them, I saw them. Five—five."

We crossed to the point again and here, when Pedro turned to talk to us, he looked squarely into the muzzle of Bill's gun.

"We intend to see them ruins, an' you are going with us," he said, calmly. "Now, mount and lead on, an' if you get lost or don't keep movin' you'll beat your pore ole mother to the happy hunting grounds easy."

Under this inducement, we took up our usual line of march, the guide ahead, Bill next, myself in the rear. Hour after hour we followed up the river-bed, while the mists rose through the trees, and gave way to the sharp-shadowed sunlight of the forenoon. Birds of lively plumage flitted here and there in the gloom of the forest, and once a flock of pigeons passed over head. We could hear the land crabs as they scuttled away into the bushes, and occasionally we would be startled by the sudden squawk of a parrot or the dry scraping of a snake as he slid from our path. Gradually the gravel slope gave way to stony terraces, places where, in the rainy season, the water would play and shoot in flashing waterfalls and cascades.

About noon the heavy forests began to thin out, and a little later, after passing into a country where the trees stood in groves, the guide suddenly turned to the southerly bank and struck off upon an almost obscure trail. It was slow travelling through the woods, but little by little the sparse tree growth was replaced with cacti, and at about three in the afternoon we crossed a divide and came out upon a side hill overlooking a wide valley, which stretched in easy, rolling fashion for miles and miles. A yellow haze lay over the whole silent scene. The clumps of royal palms standing here and there seemed to sway indistinctly in the shaking heat. The grass over the entire country was like a finely-woven, shimmering rug.

In the center of the valley, a few miles from us, there ran from west to east a placid river. Where it went to down in the east we could not see, but the place from whence it came was very apparent. Like a massive barricade, there stretched across this valley from north to south a great mountain, and the face toward us was a sheer cliff, which, although more than a mile from us, looked as high as the walls of the Grand Cañon. From the center of this rampart, and from a great gap which appeared as though made by the mighty slash of some great broadsword, ran the river, like blood from a new-cut wound.

The whole view was like a scene painted on canvas. We descended into it. It was not a steep descent, and at all times we had the landscape in sight. As we went, we became aware that the atmosphere had deceived us, for we seemed to make no progress. We plodded steadily on, and always toward the gap in the cliff whence flowed the river, but it was like walking in a dream. As far as effect went, we might as well have placed our feet in the prints from which we raised them. Yellow, yellow and hazy, everything appeared immobile and unapproachable. The silence shook our nerves. There were no snakes, no mice, not even land crabs. It was like a valley of living death, nothing but a placid river, a black wall and yellow distance.

We travelled all the afternoon and apparently with no results, and then suddenly, as is the way in the tropics, the sun dropped out of sight. The change was immediate. In a twinkling, the yellow, hazy distance was eliminated. Silently and swiftly the

landscape seemed to rush in upon us. Ten minutes after sunset we were in the river at the entrance to the gorge. We regarded each other with sidelong glances. The impenetrable landscape had been exasperating. The enveloping landscape was startling.

We crossed the stream to the northern bank, and, still following the trail, turned westward to the gorge. And here the guide balked again. Thus far had he gone, but no farther would he advance. Here he would wait while the Señors went on. The lost temple was but a few hours' ride, two at the most, and the trail was plain. He would explain but he would not guide. Bill coaxed and threatened. The man shook, but he looked into the round eye of Bill's 48, and would not stir. We considered waiting till day, but concluded that such a course would result in nothing but delay, so, at last, we told him to make camp for himself and wait for us twenty-four hours.

It was already dark when we started up the gorge. The short tropical twilight had given way to the tropical night. There was a great full moon, but it was low in the east, and the shadow of the cañon was darker by contrast. The rest of the world and all the valley became bathed in moonlight. Trees and rocks long distances away stood out sharp and distinct, and looking upon them it was difficult to believe it the same scene which had tantalized us all the afternoon.

Bill led as we struck into the gorge. For perhaps three hundred yards the path led gradually up the side of the cliff, and trended to the southwest. Reaching this point we rounded a sharp bend and found ourselves looking down a great cleft. At the bottom the river slid along black and snaky. On either side the walls rose, toppling inward, to a height of a hundred feet or more. At the farther end, a distance of nearly a mile, the two walls seemed to almost meet above.

Our path ran along the southern cliff like a shelf. It was wide and ample and there was very little underbrush. We stopped for a moment and peered down this tunnel, and I am bound to say that it appeared uninviting. Presently Bill touched his horse, and seeing him do so, I spurred mine. Instead of responding they both commenced to tremble violently, so that it was necessary to soothe and pet them. The peculiar silence of the valley

was accentuated here. It was a different kind of zero, as our old Professor used to say. Without apparent cause, and while I was still engaged in handling my horse, it suddenly occurred to me that the declivity of the river bed from end to end of that gorge must be very great, yet the water flowed below us smooth as velvet, without a ripple, like thick oil in a groove.

Step by step we urged the beasts forward. They went unwillingly, and with fear in every quaking muscle. We had gone a short distance when I thought I heard a movement on the cliff above us. I strained my ears to hear, but I was not certain. The sound came dully, but such as it was it sounded like a deadened pad-pad of footsteps on moss. I waited to hear a twig break, but none broke. So faint was the sound that I was uncertain whether I actually heard, or whether it was one of those sensations born in the ear itself, and which so often deceive when one is alone in the silent places. A moment later Bill glanced up at the cliff, and I knew that he too had heard. As we went, the sounds kept pace above and beside us.

At a signal we both stopped, There was no noise. We started and the pad-pad-pad-pad took up its march. I caught myself saying, "a dog or a jackal runs 1-2, 1-2, 1-2, 1-2, a snake scrapes, a cat creeps one-one-one slowly, a jaguar does the same. This thing marches." Noticing that I had lagged some fifty feet behind my companion, I spurred my horse. He promptly stopped in his tracks, and a great boulder struck the path ahead of me and bounded into the river.

"Cheerful place," said Bill as I joined him.

Ignoring the faint sounds which came to us, we moved on, and had traversed half the length of the ravine, perhaps, when Bill halted and pointed ahead to the cliffs on the north wall at the end. From where we stood the rocks at which we were looking took on in the moonlight which shone upon them the semblance of a great face. The likeness was so strikingly human that we were both amazed. It was a strong, full Caucasian face, and perfect in its outlines. About the mouth there was a certain grimness, and the eyes were lost beneath beetling brows, but there was no resemblance to an ancient idol, no grotesque feature, and yet I felt that it was a work of nature, not of man.

Fifty feet farther on, Bill suddenly threw his horse on to his haunches, and I heard him say "Hell." I hurried up and, though prepared, a cold chill ran over me. In the twinkling of an eye, at exactly the right place, that ancient face changed from death to life. The eyes, which had been sunken in blackness, suddenly blazed with light, and instead of a calm, severe countenance, we were confronted with a leering sneer. The expression was no less than diabolical. I will confess that I was shaken. My mouth was very dry. I was perfectly sure that it was merely moonlight reflected from mica cunningly placed by the ancient people, but from the fulness of my heart I suggested that we go back.

"Go back nothing," was the reply, and we spurred ahead. Farther on the light died from the eyes, and the face became mere stone again.

We made the remainder of that gorge at a lope, but whether we walked or ran, trotted or galloped, the soft footsteps padded along above us. At length we arrived at the end of the ravine and came out into an open moonlit field, across which ran the trail. When we came into the open the footsteps ceased to follow, but we heard them going off to the north in the woods at the side of the clearing. The field was a quarter of a mile or more in width. We forced our horses over it, and, arriving at the farther side, found ourselves on the edge of a broad, level savannah, with grass to our shoulders.

The path or trail was fairly distinct, and we plunged in. Seated upon the horses we could look away across the top of the grass in every direction. To right and left, it spread beyond our range of vision, and ahead it stretched to a large group of palms which we could faintly see in the distance. I was congratulating myself upon the fact that nothing could trail us without being seen, when I became aware that the soft pad-pad had joined us again and that it had been multiplied. I looked upon the high grass to see it sway, but in the perfect stillness, not a blade stirred, except those disturbed by our progress.

And yet, as we went, footsteps were added to footsteps, and cautiously, quickly, cat-like they trod along. Around and beside us, behind and ahead of us we could hear them moving. Though the sounds were never loud, yet it was quite possible to distin-

guish those near at hand from those at a distance, quite possible to separate the steady marchers from those hurrying to keep up.

Something like panic got hold upon us, and striking our spurs deep, we charged our shivering, sweating animals through the heavy growth. But as we ran so ran the followers. Neither faster nor slower did they go, but with a stealthy, feline tread they paced us. I had but one idea, to reach the clump of palms ahead, to gain the open, to rid myself of these sounds which I again assured myself were not sounds at all, but mere figments of my imagination.

After what seemed an hour, we rode out of the grass into a magnificent grove of royal palms, and here we drew rein and breath. I felt that I must be very white as to the face, but I looked on Bill and found excuse. His face was set like iron. The blue eyes gleamed beneath his brows. Coolly he took from its holster first one gun and then the other. Carefully he inspected them, and twirled their cylinders. Then, placing them in their holsters, he remarked:

"I am going to see the end of this trail, if I have to wear cotton in my ears — but that coyote of mine is sure skinned to a finish."

The end was not far to seek. We had no more than passed through the grove than we came out before a wall fully eighty feet high. It stretched away from us to right and left, and in the moonlight every stone was etched. Age had dismantled the top so that what had once been a smooth balustrade was nicked and broken. The large stones which had fallen from place lay sunken in the undergrowth around us. It was the most magnificent specimen of ancient architecture I had ever seen, but the most striking feature of all was the great arched doorway.

The path we were following led straight to and through the wall. Beneath an arch wide enough for three teams to drive abreast, all set about with strange images and capped with an uncouth, stooping figure which seemed about to leap down upon the intruder, the way led into a moonlit interior. We were, without doubt, at the door of the Lost Temple.

As we stirred to go forward I glanced up at the parapet and I saw shadows moving thereon. It occurred to me that, the night

before, the guide had seen shadows on the river bed. We pushed under the arch and through the musty, foul-smelling tunnel and out on to a stone paving. The moment we came into the open we both stopped to gaze. We were in a massive, square amphitheatre. On either side of us were low, broad stone steps, reaching from the tops of the outer walls down to a center. We had entered by a central way. At either side there was another entrance, and as we looked, through these there came strange shadows which spread out from them and floated and eddied over the broad steps, as leaves float and eddy in a quiet pool. Changing and shifting, they moved here and there. Hurrying and pushing, they seemed to seek their places, while more and more whirled in from those two side openings.

We were standing on a moss-grown stone pavement which stretched before us straight to the center of the amphitheatre, and there, behind and above what looked like an altar with a log lying upon it, there loomed in the moonlight a massive stone figure. A great idol it was, with an ugly, distorted face, sitting stiffly with hands on knees as the Egyptian figures sit, and from its lap there poured a stream of water the size of a man's wrist. Smooth, black and oily, like the water in the river, it fell without splash or gurgle into a carved basin immediately back of and a trifle above the altar.

The black log upon the altar caught Bill's attention, and disregarding the shadows which lined the way, he moved forward. I started to follow, but he motioned for me to stay where I was. Slowly he rode to the altar. It was about stirrup-high. I saw him step off on to the slab, I saw him move to the loglike figure and, stooping, roll it over. He straightened himself with a quick movement, and said, quietly, "Number One," and added, "He died with his guns in his hands."

The shadows swayed and swirled and settled to a tense stillness. Bill quietly removed his hat and then turned to look up at the ancient god, the Jehovah of a race which worshipped before ever man learned to fashion idols out of the black mud of the Nile. The little stream flowed smoothly into the basin. With swinging step Bill crossed to it, placed one foot upon the edge of the cup, bent his head and drank of the waters as they fell.

Hardly had his lips touched them, when he swung round toward me, and as he did so, there flashed into his eyes a look of horrified amazement. His guns fairly sprang from their holsters, and in an instant he was waving them over both sides of the amphitheatre. With a wild shout he jumped for his horse.

"Run — run," he yelled, and his voice seemed to split the silence. The shadows on the steps rolled in a black mass toward the altar. I wheeled and went out at top speed, with the hoof-beats of his horse at my horse's heels. All the tension of the day suddenly let go, and I fled, fled, I felt needlessly, and from I knew not what. I tore through the grove and the grass. I dashed across the open field. I galloped wildly along the shelf-like path in the cañon. In far less time than it took me to go in I came out to the place where Pedro was shivering in his blankets. I had come so rapidly that I had outdistanced Bill. Somewhere in the cañon I had lost him.

I did not tell Pedro what had happened. I did not think it necessary. But I sat down and waited — waited for an hour, two hours, and Bill did not come. Three hours went by, and I decided to go back for him. Mounting again I started up the trail. At a point near the entrance to the gorge where the trail passed close to the river bank, my horse snorted and reared. I dismounted and found on the bank a confused, tangled mass. It was the body of my companion, thrown up there by the river. Tightly clutched in his hands were his guns, and though I had heard no reports I found upon inspection that every shot had been fired.